

essay a student wrote about what she experienced when her boyfriend, Dave, broke their engagement:

For weeks I wondered what I had done wrong, until friends helped me realize that I was not necessarily responsible. Dave's explanation that "people change" became more acceptable to me.

The relationship between the ideas in the two sentences is not immediately clear, so the sentences are confusing. Look what happens, however, when a transitional phrase is added:

For weeks I wondered what I had done wrong, until friends helped me realize that I was not necessarily responsible. As a result, Dave's explanation that "people change" became more acceptable to me.

The transitional phrase *as a result* signals that the ideas in the first sentence function as a cause, and the ideas in the second sentence function as the effect of that cause. By demonstrating this cause-and-effect relationship, the transition smooths the flow of ideas and helps the reader understand how the writer is connecting the two thoughts.

In addition to connecting ideas in different sentences, transitions can clarify the relationship between ideas in the same sentence:

In her campaign speech, the senator claimed she favored economic aid to the unemployed and the elderly; however, her voting record demonstrates otherwise.

The transitional word *however* signals to the reader that what comes after it is in contrast to what comes before it.

Transitional words and phrases can signal a variety of relationships. The following chart presents these relationships and some common transitions used to signal them.

Transitions

To Show	Common Transitions	Example
Addition	also, and, and then, too, in addition, furthermore, moreover, equally important, another, first, second, third . . .	The mayor expects city council to approve her salary recommendations. <i>In addition</i> , she expects to gain support for her road repair program.
Time sequence	now, then, before, after, afterward, earlier, later, immediately, soon, next, meanwhile,	<i>Before</i> an agreement can be reached between the striking workers and



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To Show	Common Transitions	Example
	gradually, suddenly, finally, previously, before, next, often	management, both sides must soften their stands.
Spatial arrangement	near, nearly, far, far from, beside, in front of, beyond, above, below, to the right, around, on one side, outside, across, opposite to	As you leave the fair grounds, turn right on Route 76. <i>Just beyond</i> the junction sign is the turnoff you need.
Comparison	in the same way, similarly just like, just as, in like manner, likewise	The current administration must not abandon the poor. <i>Similarly</i> , it must not forget the elderly.
Contrast	but, still, however, on the other hand, yet, on the contrary, nevertheless, despite, in spite of	<i>In spite of</i> the currently depressed housing market, money can still be made in real estate.
Cause and effect	because, since, so, consequently, hence, as a result, therefore, thus	<i>Because of</i> this year's frost, most of the fruit crop was lost.
Purpose	for this purpose, so that this may occur, in order to	<i>In order to</i> pass the tax levy, we must show that more money is needed.
Emphasis	indeed, in fact, surely, undoubtedly, without a doubt, certainly, truly, to be sure, I am certain	Adolescence is not a carefree time. <i>In fact</i> , it can be a very unsettled period.
Illustration	for example, for instance, as an illustration, specifically, to be specific, in particular	The parents complained that the schools were too easy. They said, <i>for example</i> , that their children received no homework.
Summary or clarification	in summary, in conclusion, as I have shown, in brief, in short, in other words, all in all, that is	The used car I bought needed brakes, shocks, and tires. <i>In brief</i> , it was in bad shape.
Conceding a point	although, while this may be the case, granted, even though, whereas	<i>Whereas</i> too many Americans cannot read and write, this country's literacy rate is high.